

Making Partnerships the Driving Force of Campus Internationalization.
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This essay explores what might happen if international partnerships were viewed not just as one component of campus internationalization but as the driving, definitional force of such efforts. In so doing, it also considers why an emphasis on collaboration might be particularly appropriate right now, how internationalization programs would be reframed as a result, and what strategies can maximize the effectiveness of such partnerships.

Placing partnerships at the center is, in fact, a logical extension of the direction in which campus internationalization has been heading. What was once known as international education began, of course, as the province of a few disciplines, such as my own, anthropology. The unintended consequence – at least for U.S. institutions - was that international matters were defined as the province of a few specialists, with the promise of activities such as study abroad being, as Sheila Biddle put it, largely unfulfilled. The shift from international education to internationalization in the 1980s, however, signaled efforts to spread international learning and perspectives more broadly across campus.

Jane Knight has done as much as anyone to articulate what this shift has meant. Her 1994 definition saw internationalization as “integrating an international and intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service functions” of an institution. Her 2004 updating envisioned such integration even more comprehensively as reaching into “the purpose, function or delivery of post-secondary education.”

Building on Knight's work, what might it mean if such definitions were read in the reverse direction? What if we understood internationalization not only as a process of infusing perspectives into our institutions, but also as a process of drawing our campuses out into something larger than themselves? What if we made partnerships the central mechanism and goal of internationalization? What if we acknowledged that some very important international perspectives can only emerge through international dialogue and exchange? In this light, internationalization would rest on an institution's ability to connect with the broader world, to engage in the global construction of knowledge, and to do so with cross-cultural skill and wisdom. It would rest as much on external networks as internal expertise.

Such a shift in emphasis would also reflect the forces that have animated the recent upsurge in interest in internationalization at our institutions. After 2001, even those faculty and administrators who previously had little interest in international matters began to wrestle with 9/11 and its aftermath, the forces of economic and cultural globalization, a flattening world of IT, massive waves of immigrants and refugees, global environmental concerns, post-colonial perspectives and literatures, the globalization of science and scholarship themselves, and the worldwide market for international students.

These forces have international relations and networking at their core. The framework for academic internationalization in the 21st century is different from that of the 20th. The emphasis is no longer on specialized knowledge, held largely within a few disciplines, but rather on international interaction,

student exchange, faculty collaboration, and the resolution of global tensions and inequities, depending on one's point of entry. This renders an emphasis on international partnerships particularly appropriate. Internationalization is no longer an option, but a requirement for all disciplines, and it is shaped by global networks, which involve us all.

By placing partnerships at the heart of internationalization, we reframe what we are doing. We knock down academic towers (whether ivory or red-brick) to place ourselves in dynamic networks of exchange, engagement, and discovery. We develop academic communities larger than our own institutions. We no longer need to hire dozens of new faculty to teach international courses because we can exchange courses and teach collaboratively with our partner institutions (both virtually and face-to-face). We identify skill at international dialogue and interaction to be key learning objectives for our students, while we simultaneously model these in our relations with colleagues abroad. Disciplines that have not traditionally had an international perspective are assisted in developing one by networking with colleagues in other countries. International respect, reciprocity, and resource-sharing become the new "Three R's" of higher education.

A partnership approach to internationalization does not make international specialists obsolete; instead it adds a new emphasis and urgency to what they do. It identifies a major arena for expert knowledge - beyond the world of the experts. The perspectives of language faculty, anthropologists, political scientists, geographers, historians, and related scholars remain vitally important for assessing, interpreting, framing, and enhancing the interactions inherent in international partnerships. So, too, are their critical analyses and deconstructions of the internationalization process, no matter how painful

Placing partnerships at the core of internationalization also clarifies that a central function of international programs offices must be initiating, supporting, and framing collaborations. Such offices have long been involved in faculty and student exchanges, but the shift explored here supports an even more comprehensive and active role. International offices can become repositories for research and expertise on maximizing the effectiveness of international collaboration. They should develop workshops that draw faculty into partnerships and pilot innovative ways to use partnerships for both research and curriculum development. They should vigorously pursue cost-effective ways of funding student and faculty exchanges, and lead campus efforts to take stock of existing partnerships.

At Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) - a large, public, urban university - the Office of International Affairs has found its activities increasingly converging along such lines. Each new effort has added to our growing sense of the importance of partnerships. A key result has been a program of strategic partnerships, approved by all schools across the campus. Strategic partnerships are comprehensive alliances that provide vital linkages to universities, organizations, and communities in a few selected parts of the world. Such alliances provide platforms for deep, cumulative learning, research, and engagement, such that new projects build on previous ones, students encounter these partners in a variety of courses and co-curricular activities, and a broad spectrum of faculty collaborate across national boundaries. The result is an integrated set of activities that cuts across both campuses, enhances the capacity of each for international work, and is sustained over a long period.

Strategic partnerships illustrate one tactic for placing collaboration at the center of internationalization. For IUPUI, developing such partnerships aims at creating bi-national communities of collaboration and dialogue, pulling each institution into ever deepening relationships of mutual benefit, and giving each a long-term base of operations in the other country. These partnerships focus and prioritize campus internationalization, creating economies of scale and synergies of effort. They establish explicit

concentrations of activity that attract attention and support from external sources. They lay foundations whereby new projects build on existing ones, and new faculty, students, and staff become involved, including those with little previous international experience

This is further illustrated by our first strategic partnership: with Moi University (MU) in Eldoret, Kenya (<http://www.ium.epsilon.com>). The Indiana University School of Medicine, located at IUPUI, has collaborated with MU for nearly two decades. Over the years, this collaboration progressed from a standard exchange of a few faculty and students to a robust and remarkable collaboration to fight HIV/AIDS in western Kenya, resulting in building a joint treatment facility that serves over 30,000 patients a year. By establishing a strategic partnership earlier this year, IUPUI and MU have now committed themselves to extending this level of reciprocity and resource-sharing into other fields. This broadened alliance brings all our mutual resources to bear on the pandemic. It is also facilitating curricular and research collaborations in education, social work, informatics, engineering, library science, business, tourism management, nursing, dentistry, allied health fields, and the arts and sciences. As each new endeavor begins, it is informed and encouraged by what has already happened.

There are, of course, differences in resources between our countries and universities, something acknowledged in our budgeting and grant-writing, but the partnership between IUPUI and MU is not a one-way street. The tangibles that move from Indiana to Kenya are repaid many times over with intangibles in the other direction. IUPUI faculty, staff, and students are developing a sense of themselves as global citizens, coming to understand issues of social and economic development facing much of the world, and learning to appreciate the assets of communities they have heretofore seen only as helpless or backward. They are also developing a deep understanding of Africa, connecting them to a continent whose history is intertwined with that of the U.S. and dispelling misconceptions that continue to reverberate in the context of American racial dynamics.

What lies ahead for this strategic partnership cannot be known at this point. Nor should it be. As with all true collaborations, this alliance will take us to unexpected places. This, of course, is the point of moving partnerships to the center of internationalization. We are internationalizing by connecting, not closing ourselves off, by participating rather than observing. We hope to be as transformed by the partnership just as we want our students to be transformed by their study abroad experiences. Above all, we recognize that we no longer need to go it alone, and this is a good thing.

References Cited

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